

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OCON, SEATO

SUBJ: BANGKOK PRESS COMMENT ON SEATO

FOR US DELEGATION TO SEATO COUNCIL

1. THE THREE BANGKOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS HAVE ALL BEEN DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE EDITORIAL AND NEWS COVERAGE TO SEATO ON EVE OF COUNCIL MEETING IN NEW YORK. ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS LAY PARTICULAR STRESS ON US ATTITUDE, WHICH IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE SLACKENING IN SUPPORT FOR THE ALLIANCE, AND ALL SUGGEST THAT SEATO MAY CONTINUE TO HAVE VALIDITY FROM THAILAND'S PERSPECTIVE. FOLLOWING PARAS SUMMARIZE HIGHLIGHTS OF EACH PAPER'S COVERAGE.

2. IN SEPTEMBER 25 EDITORIAL ENTITLED "SEATO: WHERE IS KISSINGER?", THE NATION SUGGESTS THAT US, WHICH IS "THE KEY TO SEATO", IS PULLING THE RUG FROM UNDER THE ORGANIZATION BY NOT HAVING
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SECRETARY KISSINGER AS HEAD OF US DELEGATION TO COUNCIL MEETING.

NOTING THAT AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND WILL PUSH SEATO TO BECOME REGIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT WILL NOT BE MILITARLY ORIENTED, EDITORIAL SEES NO OBJECTION TO INCREASE IN ECONOMIC-SOCIAL-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES BUT CONTENDS THAT IF SEATO LOSES ITS DEFENSE ROLE IT WILL LOSE EVERYTHNG. EDITORIAL CONCLUDES: "THAILAND CAN DO WITHOUT ANOTHER ORGANIZATION LIKE ASEAN, ASPAC, OR ECAFE - THE VITAL QUESTION IS NOW WE ARE GOING TO BE GUARDED AGAINST EXTERNAL AGGRESSION."

3. IN FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN SEPTEMBER 26 EDITION, THE NATION REPORTS ON "COMPROMISE SOLUTION" TO BE ADOPTED AT COUNCIL MEETING. THIS COMPROMISE, AS DESCRIBED IN THE ARTICLE, INVOLVES

ADOPTION THAI PROPOSAL TO DISCARD CHINA CONTAINMENT POLICY "WHICH FORMS THE BASIS OF THE ORGANIZATION", "AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE" TO MERGE THE CIVIL AND MILITARY SIDES OF SEATO, REDUCTION OF THE SECRETARIAT, AND PROBABLE CESSATION OF FUTHER MILITARY EXERCISES. ARTICLE SUGGESTS THAT THIS "COMPROMISE" IS PRIMARILY INFLUENCED BY CHANGING US ATTITUDE, WHICH IS ATTESTED BY SECRETARY KISSINGERS'S NOT HEADING US DELEGATION AND HIS FAILURE TO MENTION SEATO "IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY" IN HIS SENATE HEARINGS. THE NATION CARRIES ANOTHER ARTICLE ALONGSIDE THIS FEATURE ARTICLE REPORTING US SENATE SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF WITHDRAWAL FROM SEATO.

4. IN SEPTEMBER 25 EDITORIAL ENTITLED "CRUCIAL TIME FOR SEATO", BANGKOK WORLD CALLS COUNCIL MEETING MOST CRUCIAL SESSION SINCE SEATO'S INCEPTION EDITORIAL NOTES THAT SEATO IS THE MAJOR DEFENSE LINK BETWEEN US AND THAILAND AND COMMENTS THAT HIGH OFFICIALS OF THESE TWO COUNTRIES ARE "VERY CAREFUL" WHEN THINKING OF THE ORGANIZATION. IT ALSO POINTS OUT THAT ONE OBSERVER HAS SUGGESTED THAT, IN RESHAPING ITS FOREIGN POLICY IN THE YEARS AHEAD, THAILAND MUST HAVE "SOME BARGAINING LEVERAGE". AFTER ANTICIPATING THAT ALL MEMBERS WILL AGREE AT COUNCIL MEETING TO DISPENSE WITH "FRILLS AND FANFARE", EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT "SEATO CAN QUIETLY CARRY ON ITS WONDERRUL WORK IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELDS OF MEDICINE, ANTHROPOLOGY PROMOTION OF SKILLED LABOR AND OTHERS."

5. IN SEPTEMBER 26 EDITORIAL ON "US ROLE IN SEATO", BANGKOK POST SUGGESTS THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S NON-ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL UNCLASSIFIED

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MEETING IS CLEAR INDICATION THAT US IS DE-EMPHASINIZING ITS ROLE IN THE DEFENSE ALLIANCE. EDITORIAL CONSIDERS IT UNDERSTANDABLE THAT KISSINGER WOULD NOT ATTEND SINCE HE HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR AMERICAN DETENTE WITH CHINA, THE PRESUMED "FOE" AGAINST WHICH SEATO MEMBERS WERE ALIGNED. EDITORIAL CONCLUDES AS FOLLOWS: "DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE MANILA TREATY OR THE PACIFIC CHARTER SHOULD BE SCRAPPED? IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHETHER THE COUNCIL CAN FIND NEW OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES SUCH AS THE COMBAT OF IN-

SURGENCY IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE PROBLEM
FOR THAILAND IS THAT SEATO IS THE ONLY LEGAL TIE THAT IT HAS
WITH THE US FOR MUTUAL DEFENSE. DO WE FEEL SAFE ENOUGH IN THE
ASSURANCES OF THE CHINESE THAT THEY WILL NOT ATTACK US? ARE
WE STRONG ENOUGH INTERNALLY TO FIGHT, WITHOUT OUTSIDE
AID, THE CANCER OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION? THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS
WHICH FACE OUR GOVERNMENT."
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